316 339 is quarried, lorry loads of wood are brought out, and, as in the manufacture of lime, layers of gypsum are interspersed with layers of wood and the pile fired. The slabs of gypsum are then removed and beaten into a fine powder which, when mixed with water, acts like cement. It has the advantage of being quick setting and is still used by those who cannot afford to buy imported cement.

WEAVING

288 438 291 [697] Weaving is carried on in some of the villages of Bahrain, in Abu Saiba, south of the Budaiya Road and elsewhere. "Awzars," simple garments worn by the villagers around their waists in the summer, are woven from imported cotton, while in many coastal villages the sailors spend the winters weaving sail-cloth. The prisoners on Jidda Island are also employed in weaving, on imported Irish looms, but their activities can hardly be classed as a local industry.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ANTIQUITIES OF BAHRAIN

THE WORLD'S LARGEST GRAVEYARD

172 764 THE tumuli of Bahrain have never been counted, but their number has been estimated at 50,000. In these tumuli Bahrain possesses one of the unsolved mysteries of archaeology, for despite the numerous expeditions that have been made to discover their origin, this is still in dispute.

There are three groups of tumuli in Bahrain. The largest group is that which lies on the plain between Aali and the Rifaas. The second group is to the far north of Bahrain, on each side of the Manama-Budaiya Road between Jidhafs and Diraz. The third group, consisting of a few dozen graves, is in the clearing to the north of the Suq al-Khamis Mosque.

The first group of tombs is daily passed by hundreds of people travelling between Manama and Awali, but the best examples of tumuli in this group are not along the main road but are near the village of Aali. These mounds are the largest in Bahrain and while some of them are used by the villagers for baking their pottery, the majority are just as they were left after their opening by various archaeologists. Most of these tombs face south-west and P. B. Cornwall[1] has suggested that the reason for this is that the builders of the mounds worshipped the Evening Star, Venus, which at sunset lies to the south-west. The majority of the tumuli have two storeys and, in the chamber tombs, there are niches cut into the sides of the passages. The sides and roofs of the graves themselves are of local stone and were originally covered with a layer of gypsum. Some of the tumuli are surrounded by low walls of mud and gravel. Finds in these tumuli have included the bones of men and animals, ivory statues, pieces of circular boxes, golden ornaments and earthenware vessels decorated with black stripes.

There is little agreement among the experts as to the origin and dating of these burials and each has drawn his own deductions from the

finds that have been made. Mackay, who opened 34 tumuli in 1924-, believed that they were the work of nomads who brought their dead from the mainland of Arabia. He gives as proof for this theory the fact that the pottery he found was round-bottomed, indicating that it was used in sandy country, and also the finding of ostrich eggs. After a study of the bronze objects and taking into consideration other finds Mackay considered that the tombs dated from between 1500 and 1200 B.C.

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Cornwall also believes that the Aali tombs date from the second millennium B.C.[3] and holds to the belief that the ancient "Dilmun" of cuneiform inscriptions was the Bahrain Island of to-day. Dr. W. F. Albright, who has also studied some of the finds from these tombs, places them in the first half of the second millenium B.C.

Inscriptions are of particular help to archaeologists but only one cuneiform inscription has been discovered in Bahrain, the stone slab found by Captain Durand[4] and described in Part II. This is the only cuneiform and indeed the only pre-Islamic inscription that has been found in Bahrain.

Proceeding from Manama to Budaiya the road passes through the village of Jidhafs, and beyond it through some more tumuli. Many of these mounds are also of some size and there are a number of interesting specimens which have been opened, disclosing the complex interiors and the protecting walls built from large blocks of stone. In each of these tombs there were a number of burials, in some the skeletons lay at full length, in others they were in a crouching position. Finds in these tombs also included glass and pottery, jewellery, household implements and objects carved from ivory and bone.

Mackay, who also opened some of these tombs, dates them from the third century B.C., while P. B. Cornwall believes that they were built during the Sassanid period (226-640 A.D.). It is known that the Persians seized Bahrain during the reign of Shapur II, following raids by the Arab inhabitants on the Persian coast; Shapur reigned from 300—325 A.D.

These two views are very different, but there is yet a third divergent view about these same tumuli. While the Bahrain Government was building a new road in this area it also opened some tumuli and the contents, which included ivory, glass, stone and pottery, were sent to the British Museum for identification. Their verdict was that beads found in the tumuli were a mixture of Arab and pre-historic work; that the bronze objects were of Sassanid origin; that a bronze bust was of the second to fifth century A.D.; and that a granite pot, with legs, decorated with oblique lines and circles in bands, was of very early date, possibly 2500 B.C. or even prehistoric. The Museum considered that the tombs were probably built between the sixth and eighth century A.D., which was the date of Islamic pottery found in them, and the experts explained the presence of such a mixture of objects by the fact that excavated material has always been valued throughout the Middle East and was often used by its finders.

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The tumuli on the Budaiya road are therefore as interesting as those to the south, in the Aali group, and are well worth a visit. Also on the north side of the road is a large mound believed to have been a temple of some sort; this can be distinguished by its large rooms and high protecting wall.

The third and smallest group of tombs is the group to the north of the Suq al-Khamis Mosque. While no detailed study has been made of these tumuli, the Manama Municipality, while collecting sand in this area, unearthed a tomb containing a small stone bowl with a simple circular design around the rim. According to the British Museum, this bowl dated from about 2500 B.C. and so it would seem that it has some connection with the granite bowl found near the Budaiya Road.

THE SUQ AL-KHAMIS MOSQUE AND BILAD AL-QADIM

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The oldest existing Moslem building in Bahrain and one of the most ancient Islamic relics in the Persian Gulf is the Suq al-Khamis Mosque, situated in the centre of the clearing about three miles from Manama on the road to Awali. Although its unusual twin minarets serve to identify it to the visitor, they are of comparatively recent construction and the ruined columns and walls within the low wall are all that remain of the ancient structure.

For many years the mosque has been slowly decaying, but in 1950 the Bahrain Government carried out some restoration work and the blocks and columns which for many years had lain in the sand were restored to their original position, the floor was cleared of the scrub growing there and it is now possible to obtain a better idea of the original shape and appearance of the mosque. Its former importance is shown by its careful construction from heavy columns and blocks hewn from Bahrain stone. There are few other ancient mosques in Bahrain which have been built with such care, most of them are simple erections of wood and mud, closely resembling the typical open mosques found, to this day, in Saudi Arabia.

The Suq al-Khamis Mosque differs from these other mosques in that it is of the more advanced courtyard type. The mosque itself is surrounded by an outer wall which was originally 27 by 30 yards but which is now slightly smaller. The interior of the mosque consists of three naves on each side of a central courtyard, the columns of the naves, which have been replaced by the Bahrain Government, are built from drum-shaped stones 1 ft. by 2 ft. and joined together with mortar. The pillar facades of the courtyard are still standing as they were built by the makers of the mosque. The Qibla (west) wall consists of broad pillars with half-column profiles and, according to Diez,[5] the strengthening wall of ragstone that can be seen at the base of the pillars and colums of the courtyard was erected when the mosque was rebuilt in the fifteenth century. The side walls of the courtyard are formed from double columns and the entrance or east wall of single columns. An interesting find that was made while the Bahrain Government was working on the mosque was of two graves below the east wall. The